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OCI No. 1937/63

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
4 June 1963

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Insurgency in Laos, South Vietnam, and
Iran

1. Laos

a. The Communists have increased their military activity in the Plaine des Jarres area, where they have been attacking neutralist positions to the south along Route 4 and to the north at Lat Bouak. Their immediate objectives appear to be control of both Routes 4 and 7 and possibly the interdiction of Kong Le's airfield at Muong Kheung by artillery fire. Success in these endeavors would split the neutralist forces and provide the Pathet Lao a link-up with their forces in western Laos. The neutralists claim that Vietnamese forces are directly participating in the attacks, and there are reports of increased convoy movements over Route 7 from North Vietnam which could indicate that additional North Vietnamese troops as well as supplies are being moved in. Serious weaknesses in morale, coordination, and logistics among the Kong Le-Lao Army-Meo troops virtually preclude an effective stand against any determined Communist offensive.

b. Souphannouvong has replied to Souvanna's request for further talks with a proposal that discussions be held at the Plaine des Jarres airfield, provided Pathet Lao troops are allowed at the airfield for security and Kong Le releases the Pathet Lao soldiers he is holding. Souvanna has accepted the site, but not the conditions; emissaries from Vientiane are going to Khang Khay to discuss the terms. Even if talks resume, there is no sign that the Pathet Lao intend to relax their previously stated uncompromising conditions for a negotiated settlement.

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2. South Vietnam

a. Heightened tension between the government and the Buddhist majority in South Vietnam and continuing Buddhist demonstrations increase the opportunities for disruptive Viet Cong moves and for a serious setback to the government's counterinsurgency effort. Positions have hardened as a result of the government's reluctance to meet Buddhist demands and the renewal of clashes between security troops and civilians in the northern city of Hue on 3 June. Unless the government moves quickly to redress the Buddhist grievances, the demonstrations seem increasingly likely to result in spontaneous or Viet Cong-provoked violence, and Buddhist leaders may feel driven to seek Viet Cong support. The situation continues to move toward a political crisis which could endanger government stability.

b. There is no information to substantiate government allegations that some Buddhist leaders are Viet Cong agents. The Communists' propaganda, however, has exploited the Buddhist grievances, and their international campaign charging government use of "poison chemicals" against civilians may be given a boost by government employment of tear gas--and possibly a form of mustard gas--to break up a Buddhist crowd in Hue on 3 June. There is also tentative evidence that the Viet Cong may be using black propaganda in the form of ostensible government directives urging severe repression of the Buddhists.

c. Viet Cong subversive and military activity increased last week, after a drop the previous week, but seems designed to maintain pressure on the government and does not suggest a change in Communist capabilities. There is still no firm evidence of large-scale infiltration via Laos at present, and there are continued signs that government operations are creating a pinch in Viet Cong food supplies.

3. Iran

a. Government forces stepped up their efforts against the remaining bands of insurgents of the Boir Ahmadi tribe. The present operations appear to consist of an attempt to encircle a

-2-

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sizeable area in the mountains north and northwest of Shiraz, coordinated with air strikes against suspected insurgent encampments. The two most active insurgent leaders, Abdollah Zarghampur and Naser Taheri, are still at large.

b. Banditry continues at a high level throughout Fars Province, and the government is using armed patrols, roadblocks, and other security measures to protect civilian traffic.

c. Demonstrations by religious groups opposed to the Shah's reform program, particularly woman's suffrage, were held in Tehran on 3 June. It is likely that these disturbances will spread to such other religious centers as Qom and Meshed during the present month of religious mourning (Moharram) which ends on 25 June, and some bloodshed could result. However, government security and military forces are apparently adequate to deal with these disturbances.

-3-

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